

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----088584 111445Z /40

O 111410Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 8652
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
USCINCEUR IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 3863

EXDIS

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PGOV LE
SUBJ: SITUATION IN LEBANON: DISCUSSION WITH PRIMIN HOSS

1. I CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER HOSS AT SERAIL MORNING JULY 11.
HE WANTED TO HEAR FROM ME WHAT WE WERE DOING WITH REGARD TO
CRISIS AND WHAT LUCK WE WERE HAVING IN PERSUADING SARKIS NOT
TO RESIGN. I SAID WE WERE ACTIVE ON FIVE FRONTS. WE HAD
WEIGHED IN WITH SYRIANS, WITH ISRAELIS AND WITH CHRISTIAN
MILITANTS ON NEED FOR RESTRAINT IN THIS DELICATE SITUATION.
WE WERE TALKING TO OTHER ARABS AND ENCOURAGING THEM TO TAKE
POSITIVE ATTITUDES. I HAD BEEN TO SEE PRESIDENT THREE TIMES
AND HAD DELIVERED MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY AND WE WERE URGING
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HIM TO STAY ON. I HAD FOUND PRESIDENT VERY DEPRESSED LAST
NIGHT, HOWEVER, AND WAS BEGINNING TO GET DISCOURAGED MYSELF.

2. HOSS SAID PROBLEM WAS TO GET PRESIDENT TO TAKE MORE
ACTIVE STANCE. THROUGH ABSENCE ANY PROGRAM OR PLAN A
VACUUM HAD BEEN CREATED WHICH OTHERS WERE FILLING. IF
PRESIDENT WOULD PUT FORTH A PLAN OF ACTION, PEOPLE WOULD

SUPPORT IT. PERHAPS CERTAIN ASPECTS OF IT WOULD HAVE TO BE MODIFIED BUT IMPORTANT THING WAS THAT THERE BE A DEFINITE DECISION BY THE PRESIDENT AS TO WHAT HE WANTED TO DO. UNFORTUNATELY, SARKIS WAS IN A FRAME OF MIND WHERE HE WAS NOT AMENABLE TO PERSUASION. HE WAS SO PREOCCUPIED WITH SECURITY SITUATION IN EAST BEIRUT THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO GET HIM TO TAKE DECISIONS UNTIL THAT PROBLEM COULD BE DEFUSED. THAT WAS WHAT GOVERNMENT WAS TRYING TO DO AT MOMENT.

3. HOSS ASKED WHETHER I DID NOT THINK MARONITE LEADERSHIP WAS WORKING TOWARD PARTITION AND THAT EXPLAINED WHAT WAS HAPPENING. I SAID HE MIGHT VERY WELL BE RIGHT, BUT IT WAS MY OWN FEELING THAT ALTHOUGH PARTITION WAS A THOUGHT IN THE BACK OF EVERY MARONITE MIND, LEADERSHIP WAS NOT DELIBERATELY MOVING IN THAT DIRECTION AT THIS POINT. I THOUGHT THAT IF THEY REALLY HAD DECIDED TO GO FOR PARTITION THEY WOULD BE SEEKING THAT OBJECTIVE BY MORE RATIONAL MEANS THAN PROVOKING SYRIANS. I AGREED, HOWEVER, THAT PRESSURES TOWARD PARTITION WERE MOUNTING AND THAT IT WAS LIKELY TO COME ABOUT IF THE PRESIDENT RESIGNED, ALTHOUGH I COULD NOT VISUALIZE EITHER SYRIANS OR ISRAELIS SITTING STILL AND LEAVING POWER VACUUM WHICH WOULD BE CREATED.

4. HE ASKED ME WHAT I THOUGHT POSSIBILITIES WERE OF ISRAELI INTERVENTION. I SAID ISRAELIS WERE AS CONCERNED AS WE WERE ABOUT DELICACY OF SITUATION AND HAD NO INTEREST WHATEVER
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IN ADVENTURE IN LEBANON. FROM EVERYTHING I HAD SEEN THEY WERE MAKING SINCERE EFFORT TO DISCOURAGE CHRISTIAN EXTREMISTS FROM IRRESPONSIBLE ACTION. IF SYRIANS HAD CONTINUED POUNDING EAST BEIRUT, OR IF THEY RESUMED AND IT WENT ON LONG ENOUGH, ISRAELI ACTION OF SOME SORT WAS PROBABLY INEVITABLE, BUT CERTAINLY ISRAELIS HOPED THAT COULD BE AVOIDED AND SO DID WE.

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EXDIS

5. I ASKED HOSS WHAT MOSLEMS COULD ACCEPT WITH REGARD
DISPOSITION OF MAJOR HADDAD. WOULD THEY SIT STILL FOR HIS
BEING SENT AS MILITARY ATTACHE TO CHILE OR SOMETHING LIKE
THAT? HOSS SAID THAT UNFORTUNATELY PROBLEM HAD BEEN ALLOWED
TO GO ON TOO LONG AND WE HAD GOTTEN BEYOND POINT WHERE HADDAD
COULD REMAIN IN ARMY. HE WOULD HAVE TO BE BROUGHT OUT OF
THE SOUTH AND WOULD HAVE TO LEAVE THE ARMY. THIS COULD HAVE
BEEN DONE SIMPLY AND FAIRLY PRIOR TO JULY 1 UNDER SPECIAL
POWERS ENJOYED BY THE GOVERNMENT. THOSE POWERS HAD
LAPSED, HOWEVER, WITHOUT ANY ACTION BEING TAKEN. NOW THE ONLY
WAY HADDAD COULD BE REMOVED FROM THE ARMY WAS BY MILITARY
TRIBUNAL OR DISCIPLINARY PANEL, WHICH NO ONE WANTED AT
PRESENT TIME.

6. I ASKED WHETHER HE THOUGHT IF PRESIDENT PROCEEDED
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WITH HIS RESIGNATION IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO HAVE A
PEACEFUL TRANSITION. HOSS SAID IT WOULD DEPEND ON HOW IT
WAS DONE. THE PRESIDENT'S APPARENT INTENTION OF EMULATING
BISHARA EL-KHOURY AND TURNING POWER OVER TO A THREE-MAN
GOVERNMENT HEADED BY A MARONITE WAS NOT GOING TO BE ACCEPT-
ABLE TO MOSLEMS. HE, HOSS, WOULD FIND IT VERY DIFFICULT
TO RESIGN IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES. HE THOUGHT RESULTS WOULD
BE A DISASTER. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF PRESIDENT WAS PRE-
PARED TO REMAIN ON UNTIL A SUCCESSOR COULD BE ELECTED--
AND THIS WOULD REQUIRE A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT WHICH
WOULD MEAN THAT THERE MUST BE TWO MEETINGS OF PARLIAMENT,
ONE FOR THE AMENDMENT AND ONE FOR THE EDNWFZHD MEET--THEN A
PEACEFUL TRANSITION COULD BE ARRANGED. IT WOULD BE VERY
COMPLICATED, HOWEVER, AND HE HOPED IT DID NOT COME TO THAT.

7. COMMENT: HOSS AT LEAST HAS NOT GIVEN UP AND ACTS AS
THOUGH HE THINKS SITUATION CAN BE SALVAGED. HE EXPRESSED
APPRECIATION FOR OUR EFFORTS TO DATE AND SAID HE HOPES WE
WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT LEBANON AND URGE SARKIS TO STAY ON.
I THINK WE CAN COUNT ON HIM TO PLAY A RESPONSIBLE ROLE, BUT
HE IS NOT A POLITICAL LEADER AND HIS ABILITY TO INFLUENCE
SUNNI OPINION IS LIMITED.
PARKER

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